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Bixby receives Tibbetts award for SBIR work

by Rex Swenson, Munitions Directorate

EGLIN AIR FORCE BASE, Fla. — Richard “Dick” Bixby of Eglin’s Air Force Research Laboratory Munitions Directorate (AFRL/MN) received an award for his work supporting the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) program. Bixby was presented the Tibbetts award on Oct. 2, in Washington, D.C.

“I am very pleased and surprised to receive the award. It was quite an impressive ceremony,” said Bixby.

The award, named for Roland Tibbetts who led the federal effort to create the SBIR program, marks the accomplishments of people and businesses that work with or on behalf of the SBIR program. It is the U.S. Small Business Administration’s (SBA) highest national recognition for research and development.

Dr. Joel House, Munitions Directorate scientist, explained why he nominated Bixby for the Tibbetts award. “Mr. Bixby’s work in the administration of the SBIR Program was recently recognized when he was selected as the Air Force Research Laboratory’s SBIR Manager of the Year. This award speaks highly of his dedication to the SBIR process, and to his understanding of the importance it plays in meeting the mission of the Munitions Directorate.”

Bixby has served as the Munitions Directorate SBIR Focal Point for 10 years. During this timeframe he has provided administrative oversight for more than \$100 million in SBIR resources, representing 10 to 12 percent of the Munitions Directorate’s total budget.

According to House, Bixby’s leadership in the SBIR program has allowed the Munitions Directorate to advance numerous enabling technologies. These technologies are important in the development of future munitions systems for the Air Force.

“These technologies range from material processing, explosives, fuzing, guidance, weapon effectiveness, and seeker development. The success in developing innovative technology through SBIR projects has made them highly valued within the directorate. These projects are a fundamental component for the Munitions Directorate’s mission to develop and transition affordable weapons technology,” said House.

Bixby has positioned the directorate to provide a fully integrated weapon concepts, with options for enhancing the warhead package lethality based on innovations in material science. The material processing development was made possible by collaborations between government and SBIR contractor engineers and scientists. Enhancing the lethal package provides a unique national defense capability for systems like the Powered Low Cost Autonomous Attack System (PLOCAAS).

“As a manager of one of these SBIR programs, I have witnessed the impact these resources have on building a technology base for new weapon systems,” said House.

Supported by Bixby, MN and the SBIR contractor developed a material processing specification for warhead components that is being evaluated in a multi-million dollar warhead demonstration program.

According to House, the material research greatly reduced the development risk, while increasing the warhead performance. The potential for the technology is to have a significant impact on other directorate armament programs.

Bixby has been involved in many different and varied activities besides the Government to earn his livelihood - from working on the financial staff of General Motors Corporation to owning and operating a restaurant for 15 years. Because of his variety of experiences, he brings unique vision to the Munitions Directorate’s SBIR program. He understands not only the government’s point of view but also that of businesses, both large and small. @



Richard “Dick” Bixby